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ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA • ANGEL MEDINA • SCOTT HANNA
The Sensational
SPIDER-MAN
DIRECT EDITION
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THE PAST.
THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.
FROM THE JOURNALS OF DR. VINCENT STEGRON:
Do you believe everything happens for a reason?
As a scientist, I should reject notions of fate and pre-destination, but... experience teaches me otherwise.
I left civilization to escape the world of men and mammals...
After suffering defeat at the hands of spider-man and his warm-blooded compatriots, I exiled myself to the edge of the world...
...looking, I think, for death.
Instead, I found...

FERAL PART FIVE: The ROCK of LIFE

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...the rock of life.

Have you ever heard about the prime asteroid? From which life first sprang?

whose physical properties changed over time, eventually triggering the great ice age?

The story goes--

--pieces of that asteroid still exist. And give off a radiation that disrupts the very laws of nature and science. That can, in fact, reverse the evolutionary process.

I now know...

...all the stories? They're true.

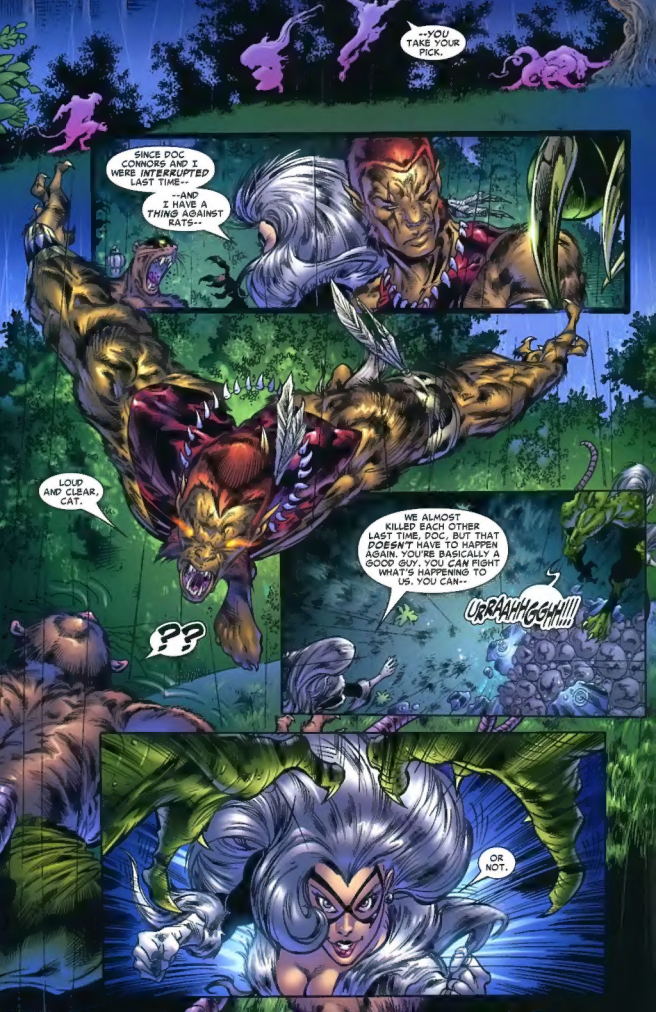
The irony wasn't lost on me as I trudged across the ice:
That I, who had once dreamed of bringing the thunder lizards back to life...
...who dreamed of turning the modern world's most fetid, congested metropolis into a primordial, prehistoric utopia...
...I, Vincent Stegron, had literally stumbled across the answer to my every waking wish.
...
Everything happens for a reason...
...even to an also-ran like me.
The trip across the sea, back to New York, was quiet and uneventful.
(And short enough that I only ate three of my fellow travelers.)

I sent the rock of life to my old colleague, geologist Richard Treiman.
No note, no return address.
A Trojan Horse, hand-delivered to the Museum of Natural History.
HELLO, CONNORS? I WAS WONDERING IF YOU MIGHT TAKE A LOOK AT THIS ASTEROID I HAVE DOWN HERE.
...
YES, CURT, I REALIZE YOU'RE A BIOLOGIST, BUT STILL...
I waited, then.
waited until...
...the rains came and the asteroid's radiation started to seep out across the city...
...and things began to change... downtown...

...and it was time to claim my kingdom.
CRAASHH!
PIIISSSST THE ANIMALSSSS, SPIDER-MAN...
The monkeys and rhinos at the zoo that killed themselves.
STEGRON, YOU NUT-JOB!!! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO US??
THEN THE MONSTERSSSS...
Man-Wolf. Vermin. The Lizard.
THEN THE MAMMALSSS LIKE YOU...
UHHNF!
Me and the Black Cat, yeah.
(Man, that hurt.)

THEN EVERYONE ELSSSSE...
The whole city, going nuts.
And none crazier than--
IMAGINE A WORLD OF REPTILESSSSS, SSPIDER-MAN...
DON'T NEED TO, STEGGY, THAT'S WHY GOD MADE ROGER CORMAN MOVIES.
THMP
THMP
BUT WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW IS? MAMMALS?
WE'RE NEVER GOING AWAY.
Uh, wait. Is that a RAPTOR? Coming at me? Is that a--?
RHEEEE
SO, AS I WAS SAYING--
HEY, where'd Stegron go???

Outside.
The museum of natural history.
The rat and the reptile.
Vermin and the lizard.
Dumb, stupid animals trying to kill each other.
They would, too..
--if not for the two other animals nearby.
Which do you want, puma?
Claws or no claws, I'm still a gentleman, cat--


--YOU TAKE YOUR PICK.
SINCE DOC CONNORS AND I WERE INTERRUPTED LAST TIME--
--AND I HAVE A THING AGAINST RATS--
LOUD AND CLEAR, CAT.
??
WE ALMOST KILLED EACH OTHER LAST TIME, DOC, BUT THAT DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN AGAIN. YOU'RE BASICALLY A GOOD GUY. YOU CAN FIGHT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US. YOU CAN--
GRRAAHHGGHH!!!!
OR NOT.

HUNNFF!!
CRACKK!
OUCH.
PLEASE, DR. CONNORS, PLEASE TELL ME YOU'RE--
--DOWN FOR THE COUNT? LOOKS LIKE.
SAME AS VERMIN.
THAT WAS... EFFICIENT.
THEY WERE ALREADY EXHAUSTED, CAT...

"...AND WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO WASTE
Ironically, I'm in the HALL OF INSECTS now, play rig..
I mean, I'm actually PLAYING HIDE-AND-SEEK with a man who's ha f-d inosaur.
If I weren't such a SCIENCE GEEK, I'd be seriously--
--WAIT.
Something SHUFFLING over--
OH MY
HUHR?

URAGHH
WHOA
Th s is TRICKY. Whoever this guy is--
--probably someone who works at the museum!--
URARGHH!?
I just have to CONTAIN him.
URRHHHDDD
THUD!
--I CAN'T hurt him
And hope that his transformation--
THMP
THMP
--DEVOLUTION actually!--
--can be REVERSED.
UHRRGAHHH...
AND THAT ISSS MEANT TO BE THE DOMINANT SSSPECIESSS?

STUPID. My SPIDER-SENSE is still--
THWACK!
FOR THAT DROOLING MESSSSSS, REPTILESSSS SSSHOULD ROLL OVER AND PLAY DEAD???
THE MORE MAMMALSSS DEVOLVE, SSSPIDER-MAN--
--THE MORE PATHETIC THEY GET.

THE MORE REPTILESS DEVOLVE, THE SSSTRONGER--THE MORE SSSUPERIOR--WE GET
Oh God I gotta end this but FAST Stegron's actin' like he's starting to make--
SPIDER-MAN?
XL
Who--what NOW?
PROFESSOR RICHARDS?
AFFIRMATIVE, SON, TALKING TO YOU THROUGH YOUR COSTUME.
OKAY, THAT'S... COOL.
THAT'S TONY STARK, BUT LISTEN TO ME: TAPPING INTO YOUR SUIT'S SYSTEMS, I CAN "SEE" YOU FIGHTING STEGRON. BUT HE'S NOT THE PROBLEM. HE'S A SYMPTOM OF THE PROBLEM.
HATE TO DISAGREE WITH YOU, PROF, BUT STEGGY IS VERY MUCH--
KER-RASH!!!!!
--A PROBLEM!!

NEVERTHELESS, WITH THESE FISTICUFFS, ALL YOU'RE DOING IS ENABLING. FORGET VINCENT STEGRON FOR THE MOMENT--
BE THRILLED TO. BUT--
NO BUTS. YOUR NEW SUIT HAS CAMOUFLAGE CAPABILITIES. USE THEM.
Right like I can just--
--oh, wow, I actually CAN just think it and it happens.
SSSSSSPIDER-MAN. COMB OUT, COMB OUT, COMB OUT, SSSSO I CAN EAT YOU.
Luckily, dinosaurs have--had--(whatever)-- notorious y bad senses of smell, so..
...I guess not EVERYTHING has to be about beating each other silly

GOOD WORK. NOW I NEED YOU TO GO THREE FLOORS DOWN, EXACTLY FROM WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT THIS SECOND.
HOW COME, DOC?
THESE LONER SUPER HEROES...ALL THEY DO IS ASK QUESTIONS.
BECAUSE, SPIDER-MAN, THIS THING THAT'S THROWING NEW YORK'S BIO- AND ECOSYSTEMS INTO CHAOS? THE SOURCE OF THE RADIATION? MY READINGS INDICATE...
"...YOU'RE RIGHT ON TOP OF IT."
"...I don't know what I was expecting, but
This close to the "source," shouldn't I be going INSANE with rage? Shouldn't I be COMPLETELY feral?
Unless

Dr. Richards used the word radiation...
And my new costume's made of "smart" LIQUID meta...
I wonder if...
WHOA
Yet again, this new suit reacts at the speed of THOUGHT.
That's it baby.
Wrap around the meteorite nice and TIGHT. Insulate the hell out of it
HEY, DR. RICHARDS, YOU THERE? I THINK I FOUND WHAT WAS GIVING OFF THE RADIATION YOU WERE--
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE???

UH-OH.
THE ROCK OF LIFE--WHAT DID YOU DO TO IT????
I...
WAIT, WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "ROCK OF LIFE"?
MY GIFT TO THE WORLD--
"YOUR"...?
HOLD UP. YOU BROUGHT THAT ROCK TO NEW YORK?
TO RETURN IT TO WHAT IT ONCE WASSS...
SO THAT REPTILES MAY ASSSCEND...
YOU...
OH, GOD, DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY LIVES YOU'VE RUINED?
HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED BECAUSE OF THIS THING?
...ALL MY DREAMSSSS...
RICHARDS WAS WRONG. YOU'RE NOT A SYMPTOM, YOU'RE--
--YOU'RE INSANE!!

YOU'RE-- NOTHING!!!
THACK!
THK!
A COLD-BLOODED NOTHING THAT SHOULDN'T EVEN BE BREATHING.
REALITY CHECK, STEGRON. IT'S NOT MAMMALS OR REPTILES THAT RULE THE WORLD--
--IT'S SPIDERS!!!
--PLEASSSSSS--

I COULD, YOU KNOW. CRIPPLE YOU FOR LIFE. BLAME THE ASTEROID. THE RADIATION. NO ONE WOULD CARE. EVEN JAMESON WOULD PRAISE ME...
...DON'T...
...BUT IT'S NOT IN MY NATURE.
I'M NOT AN ANIMAL.
SPIDER-MAN...
...WHATEVER YOU DID, LOVERBOY, IT'S OVER.
THINGS ARE CHANGING BACK TO WHAT THEY WERE, AND WE'RE...
...THE ANGER INSIDE US IS GONE.
...MY BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL WORLD...

ALL BECAUSE OF A ROCK, DR. STEGRON.
ALL THIS INSANITY...
...AND FOR WHAT, ULTIMATELY? NOTHING.
ALMOST AS IF ON CUE...
...THE RAIN STOPS, THE STORM CLEARS.
THE ROCK OF LIFE IS CONTAINED...
...THE SLEEPING WOLF IS RELEASED...
...THE CATS ENJOY A LATE-NIGHT...
...SAUCER OF MILK...
...THE RAT CONTEMPLATES ITS LATEST TRAP...
FRITZ
...AND A FATHER AND SON REUNITE.

COPA:

YOU DID GOOD TONIGHT, TIGER. REALLY, REALLY GOOD.

DID I?

I DON'T KNOW, MJ...

...THINGS STILL FEEL VERY, VERY WRONG IN THE WORLD.

"AS WELL THEY SHOULD, SPIDER-MAN..."

CASSANDRA WEBB'S APARTMENT.

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.

...YOUR LIFE, SUCH AS IT IS...

...IS ABOUT TO GET MUCH, MUCH MORE COMPLICATED.

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TO BE CONTINUED!

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